Curriculum Guideline

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Introduction

This curriculum guideline outlines the requirements for the Ontario Academic Course (OAC) in Philosophy (HZP0A).

This course may be used to meet the Senior Division social science credit requirement for an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. A minimum of 110 hours of instruction is required for one credit.

The study of philosophy is an appropriate part of any student's program, regardless of the student's primary area of interest. In order to accommodate all students, therefore, the prerequisite for the OAC in Philosophy is at least one credit in an advanced level Senior Division course from the ministry's curriculum guideline *English, Intermediate and Senior Divisions (Grades 7–12), 1987.*[1]

Rationale

Philosophical inquiry has a history of nearly three thousand years and has been pursued in many cultures. Nearly everyone has heard the term *philosophy*. Many associate it with great thinkers of the past, such as Confucius, Socrates, or Descartes. Some may relate it to philosopher-humanists or philosopher-scientists, such as Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell, or Abdus Salam. Others may think of it in connection with religious or political thinkers such as Martin Buber or Gandhi. Most will have made some attempt at developing their own philosophy of life.

Philosophy may be defined as critical and creative thinking about such fundamental questions as Who am I? How should I live? Is there sense to the universe? and What is truth? In investigating such questions, the aim is to clarify the issues and examine their implications through both observation and the use of reason and, if possible, to propose answers to them. The study of philosophy develops skill in critical thinking and sharpens understanding by uncovering presuppositions, identifying core premises, and evaluating arguments both in everyday life and in systems of thought. It also requires creativity in dealing with new problems and developing new perspectives.

The discipline of philosophy has made, and continues to make, major contributions to human thought. As a separate discipline, philosophy has provided a general framework for the continued investigation of fundamental questions from ancient times to the present. In addition, approaches, methods, and concepts that were developed in philosophical inquiry have been of central importance in the attempt to arrive at answers to fundamental

1. Ministry of Education, Ontario, *English, Intermediate and Senior Divisions (Grades 7–12)* (Toronto: Ministry of Education, Ontario, 1987).

questions. As a result of this continual inquiry into fundamental philosophical problems, other distinct disciplines have been developed over the centuries to deal with problems that require more specialized investigation – for example, theology, mathematics, physics, history, psychology, economics, and statecraft. In contemporary society, philosophers continue to grapple with fundamental questions, reminding those in other disciplines of the necessity of questioning underlying assumptions and considering their work in a broader context.

Philosophy embraces a wide range of topics common to both Eastern and Western thought: the nature of existence (metaphysics); the theory of knowledge (epistemology); and ethical, political, aesthetic, and religious aspects of human nature and action. Philosophers investigate age-old problems, such as the nature and limits of science and the patterns of reasoning, as well as contemporary issues, such as the nature of artificial intelligence. In recent years, various thinkers have contributed systematic analysis to discussions of gender issues, racial and ethnocultural questions, aboriginal concerns, power relationships, professional and bioethical dilemmas, and environmental questions.

The OAC in Philosophy emphasizes clarity of thinking and communication in the investigation of various aspects of human experience and values. Since clear and cogent writing and speaking both demand and issue from clear thinking, this course will improve students' communication skills, which in turn will be of benefit in a wide variety of situations in which clear analysis and expression are important.

In the OAC in Philosophy, students will develop their imaginative, critical, analytical, and problem-solving skills through oral and written discussions and presentations. Guided practice in analytical reading and writing of well-argued philosophical prose will help students to articulate, examine, and reflect on their own and others' ideas. Study of formal and informal reasoning will enable them to develop these skills systematically. As students become acquainted with philosophical questions and methods, they will be able to think with more insight and clarity about issues in their own lives.

Since disciplined philosophical study will help students to increase their knowledge and understanding of themselves and the world around them, the OAC in Philosophy will provide a basis for further studies in the social sciences and humanities, as well as an understanding of the foundations of natural science and its place in the modern world.

Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes that follow are the observable/measurable knowledge, skills, and values that students taking the OAC in Philosophy are expected to have acquired and demonstrated by the end of the course. Students should demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes in both written and oral forms, as appropriate.

It should be stressed that, although the outcomes are listed under the separate categories of knowledge, skills, and values, they are interrelated and can be achieved and demonstrated in a wide variety of learning activities.

Knowledge

Students will be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge of some major philosophers and schools of thought;
- demonstrate knowledge of some of the main concepts in philosophy, including definitions of concepts;
- demonstrate knowledge of examples of philosophical explanations taken from such sources as philosophical and scientific texts;
- demonstrate knowledge of a variety of methods of philosophical inquiry;
- demonstrate knowledge of the terminology and main techniques used in formal and informal logic;
- explore the current limits to knowledge and the limits to understanding, and examine possibilities for increasing knowledge;
- articulate an understanding of connections between reason and feeling and between cultural and intellectual traditions;
- express their conclusions with awareness of the degree to which these conclusions are supported by evidence;
- include in their writings suggestions for further thought and research.

Skills

Students will be able to:

- identify assumptions that underlie theories, arguments, and positions in selected writings and the media, and in everyday life;
- demonstrate imaginative, creative, and reflective abilities by articulating philosophical insights;
- detect fallacies and evaluate arguments by assessing validity and soundness and the relevance of conclusions to premises;
- demonstrate increased use of reasoned argument to support their views;
- articulate counter-arguments to their own positions;
- present effectively in writing an extended argument on a topic of philosophical significance;
- think, write, and speak clearly, and recognize clarity of thought in the work of others;
- ask questions to clarify problems further;
- extract central ideas and arguments from print and non-print sources.

Course Content

Values

Students will be able to:

- demonstrate openness and intellectual humility by approaching situations involving a conflict of views in a spirit of inquiry;
- identify and reflect on values through analysis of case studies in such areas as racism, justice, violence, and the impact of humans on the environment;
- reflect on their intellectual and intuitive responses to issues concerning values;
- demonstrate growth in intellectual curiosity and the ability to reflect by posing increasingly wide-ranging and probing questions;
- identify gender and cultural biases in arguments, concepts, and methods;
- demonstrate increasing awareness of the complexity of issues and of the necessity of examining issues from many different perspectives;
- recognize that there are alternative approaches to apprehending truth and reality.

The OAC in Philosophy shall consist of three compulsory units. Each unit will allow the teacher some flexibility in the choice of specific topics and readings.

The percentage of time to be allotted to each unit in the course is as follows:

Unit 1: Introduction to Philosophical Inquiry	10 per cent
Unit 2: Overview of the Areas of Philosophy	60 per cent
Unit 3: Exploration of Topics in Depth	30 per cent

Unit 1: Introduction to Philosophical Inquiry

In this part of the course, attention will be given to the purposes and benefits of studying philosophy. Students will be introduced to various types of philosophical questions and problems and to some of the areas of philosophy that deal with these questions – for example, epistemology (theory of knowledge), ethics (foundations of morality), metaphysics (theories of the nature of existence), and logic (principles of reasoning).

In working on some specific philosophical problems, students will also become acquainted with some of the main methods of philosophical inquiry, such as Socratic dialogue or method, inquiry through the use of myth or anecdote, and textual analysis. Students should learn some techniques of argumentation in this introductory unit.

Unit 2: Overview of the Areas of Philosophy

In this unit, students shall explore *four* of the seven major areas of philosophy, including at least one of the following areas: philosophy of human nature, ethics, and social and political philosophy.

The seven major areas of philosophy are given below. Possible topics are listed under each area.

a) *Philosophy of human nature:*
- free will and determinism
- the meaning of life
- egoism and altruism
- mind and body
- responsibility
- personal identity
- consciousness

b) *Ethics:*
- pleasure and desire
- morality and reason
- good and evil
- the self and others
- virtue and "the good life"
- ethics and the professions
- relativism and objectivity
- rights and duties

c) *Social and political philosophy:*
- freedom and autonomy
- violence and power
- justice and equity
- the community and the individual
- the state and citizenship
- rights and duties
- biases based on gender and culture
- humans and the environment

d) *Epistemology:*
- knowledge and belief
- truth
- evidence and proof
- scepticism
- rationalism and empiricism
- ways of knowing
- intuition and idea
- bias
- philosophy of language

e) *Logic and the philosophy of science:*
- observation and theory
- inductive and deductive reasoning
- formal and informal logic
- validity and soundness in arguments
- fallacies in arguments
- discovery and justification
- realism and phenomenalism

f) *Aesthetics:*
- taste and judgement
- standards of criticism
- creativity and creation
- art and society
- genre
- beauty

g) *Metaphysics:*
- being, non-being, and becoming
- space and time
- identity and difference
- causality
- deity

There shall be readings in this unit, and they shall be drawn from more than one historical period and more than one philosophical tradition – for example, African, Asian, European, First Nations, Latin American. In addition to investigating fundamental questions that have concerned philosophers for millennia, students should also examine issues that are relatively unexplored. At appropriate points, students will consider how philosophical inquiry is enriched by including consideration of gender and culture and impoverished by omitting discussion of these topics. Throughout, critical-thinking skills shall be taught as part of the exercise of reading, discussing, and writing. Although the seven major areas are listed separately, they are interrelated, and aspects of one area may be integrated with aspects of another.

Unit 3: Exploration of Topics in Depth

This unit gives teachers and students the opportunity to explore in greater depth one or two aspects of philosophy. It permits the teacher to pursue topics in depth that were surveyed in unit 2 or to introduce new topics. This exploration may focus on philosophical concepts or problems, philosophers, schools of thought, or methods of philosophical inquiry. It shall include an overview of the work of at least one major philosopher or school of thought. Part of the work for this unit shall be completed through independent study.

Considerations for Planning

To ensure that the learning outcomes are achieved, a variety of resources should be available to students taking the OAC in Philosophy. Students need to read both primary sources (i.e., actual writings of some major philosophers) and secondary sources, including contemporary philosophical texts and case studies. They should also have access to other learning media, such as videotapes or films. Field trips may be planned so that students can attend lectures on topics related to their studies. Resources may also be brought to the school, for example, guest speakers.

In the case of a French-language school or class, the necessary resources must be available and accessible in French, and learning activities must take place in French.

To assist students in achieving the learning outcomes, teachers should provide them with opportunities to:

- write short explications of key passages in philosophical texts;
- produce writing that not only contains criticism of philosophical positions but also examines the complexity of the issues raised;
- discuss and/or write on values in a reflective manner;
- write an essay developing an argument and achieve precision and clarity by revising that essay in the light of feedback from peers and teacher;
- produce creative works that express personal responses to philosophical issues (e.g., poetry, dance, drama, visual art, music);
- analyse the structure of philosophers' arguments;
- use techniques of formal and informal logic to identify the components of arguments and evaluate arguments in both print and non-print media;

- analyse various examples of logical fallacies to arrive at models for detecting similar fallacies in information in both print and non-print media;
- identify assumptions that may limit the development of knowledge;
- distinguish between current and absolute limits to knowledge;
- distinguish between philosophical and non-philosophical questions;
- experiment with a variety of philosophical methods in discussions and in individual written work;
- become familiar with examples of the diversity of human values and ways of thinking through reading, examination of case studies, and discussion;
- examine different intellectual and cultural traditions through individual or group research, role playing, or field trips;
- examine arguments and methods to determine whether they contain explicit and implicit gender or cultural bias;
- reflect on connections among a wide range of philosophical issues and approaches studied in the course;
- participate in a learning environment that encourages them to inquire freely into philosophical problems and to take intellectual risks;
- investigate a specific issue and challenge prevailing attitudes through examining presentations by guest speakers, which could include personal testimonies;
- participate in seminars in which they pose philosophical questions and offer carefully considered responses to the questions;
- engage in a variety of activities that encourage them to raise philosophical questions and come up with insights;
- learn to uncover unstated and contentious assumptions;
- learn to communicate more clearly with one another in debate or dialogue;
- develop skills in self- and peer evaluation.

Evaluation of Student Achievement

Basic Considerations

Assessment and evaluation support the learning process and shall be directly related to the learning outcomes for the course. Both learning and assessment activities should provide students with opportunities to demonstrate progress in developing their reading, writing, and speaking skills and their ability to analyse, synthesize, and evaluate. In measuring student achievement, teachers shall take into consideration *all* of the learning outcomes listed on pages 5 and 6, and assess the extent to which students have achieved the outcomes. Accurate and conscientious assessment is essential to ensure that the standards appropriate for an OAC are maintained.

Policies and procedures for evaluation shall be outlined and explained to the students at the beginning of the course.

Methods of Evaluation

All students shall be required to write at least one examination. As part of their term work, students shall write one essay of 1200 words or more that demonstrates an ability to develop a position, select and evaluate evidence, and write effectively. In addition, the teacher may require one or more shorter essays. Students shall also complete an independent study project.

Students must also be assessed on oral work, such as performance in class discussions, seminar presentations, debates, or dramatizations.

To ensure that evaluation is an integral part of the course, teachers should assess students' written and oral work on a regular basis, using a wide variety of evaluation methods. They should evaluate students' daily work, so that they can continually assess students' progress in developing good judgement, analytical skills, and communication skills, in addition to knowledge of philosophy. They should also assess students' achievement at the end of each unit by some method such as a test or short paper.

Allotting of Marks

The evaluation of a student's performance in this course shall occur in the following proportions, in order to permit assessment as frequently and by as many methods as possible:

Written examination(s)	30 per cent
Essay(s)	20 per cent
Oral work	20 per cent
Independent study project	10–20 per cent
Other term work	10–20 per cent

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